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The White House Gardens and Grounds

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Welcome to the White House Gardens!

These beloved White House grounds have been treasured for more than two centuries by presidents and their families, White House staff, and visitors. This inviting sanctuary owes its present beauty to the vision, green thumbs, and persistent nurturing of the many families and gardeners who have lived and work here.

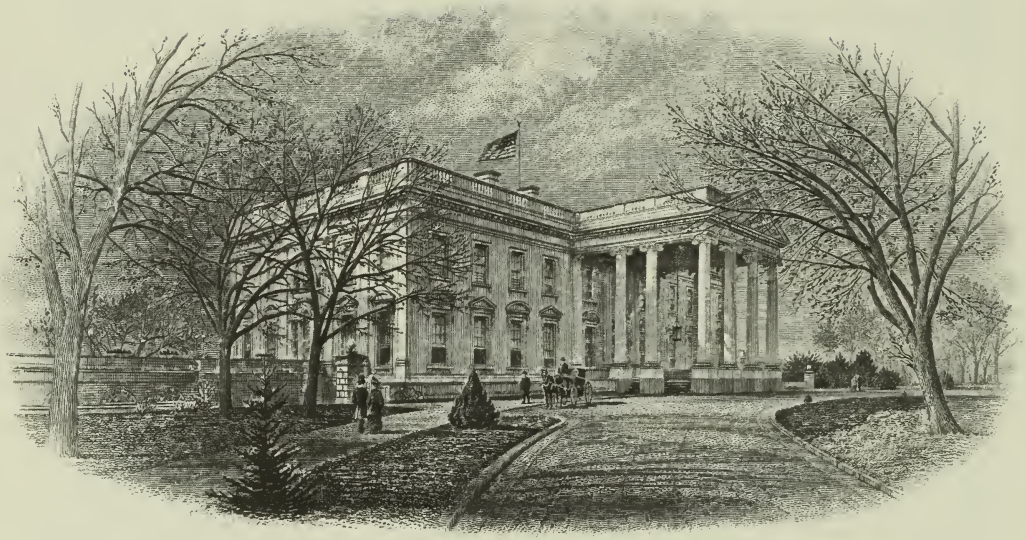
Your tour will take you through a rich and colorful history -- over grounds dreamed of by George Washington, defined by Thomas Jefferson, drained and filled by Ulysses S. Grant and enriched with color and cover by many caretakers through the years.

Within the boundaries of these 18-plus acres, treaties have been signed, wedding vows exchanged, Easter eggs rolled, T-ball games and other sports played, solitude enjoyed, and countless daily gardening tasks performed. Here the American story continues to unfold, through acts both grand and simple.

Nearly every presidential family has contributed something to this special place. For example, President Woodrow Wilson's wife Ellen planted the first roses in the West Garden; President John Kennedy expanded the Rose Garden to accommodate outdoor ceremonies; and Mrs. Lyndon Johnson reconfigured the East Garden to feature seasonal flowers and named it for Jacqueline Kennedy.

The White House gardens reflect the delight of a new season, as summer blossoms give way to the orange, yellow, blue and red of chrysanthemums, asters and salvia. As the splendid colors of fall bless our nation's capital, President Bush and I are delighted that you are here today to share the beauty. We wish you a most enjoyable visit!

Laura Bush



The grounds, groves, and extensive plantings at the White House compose the oldest continually maintained landscape in the United States. Although it is situated in the heart of the city, when one is in the garden's midst, it seems far removed from the noise of automobiles and the rush of busy capital life. The garden is open to the public two times a year, on dates in April and October, carefully calculated to coincide with the peak weekends of spring and fall.

John Adams, second president, and in 1800 the first occupant of the White House, ordered a garden "turned up" in the fall before he arrived, hoping to enjoy early vegetables. Defeated within months by Thomas Jefferson, he left before his garden was green. Jefferson made plans for planting native trees in the grounds and devised winding driveways and mass plantings of rhododendron and other American shrubbery. Ironically, however, it was John Adams's son, John Quincy Adams, who in the 1820s formally established a gardening program at the White House. Early in the morning the younger Adams liked to dig in the flowerbeds and claimed in his diary to have planted over a thousand trees here before his time came to move.

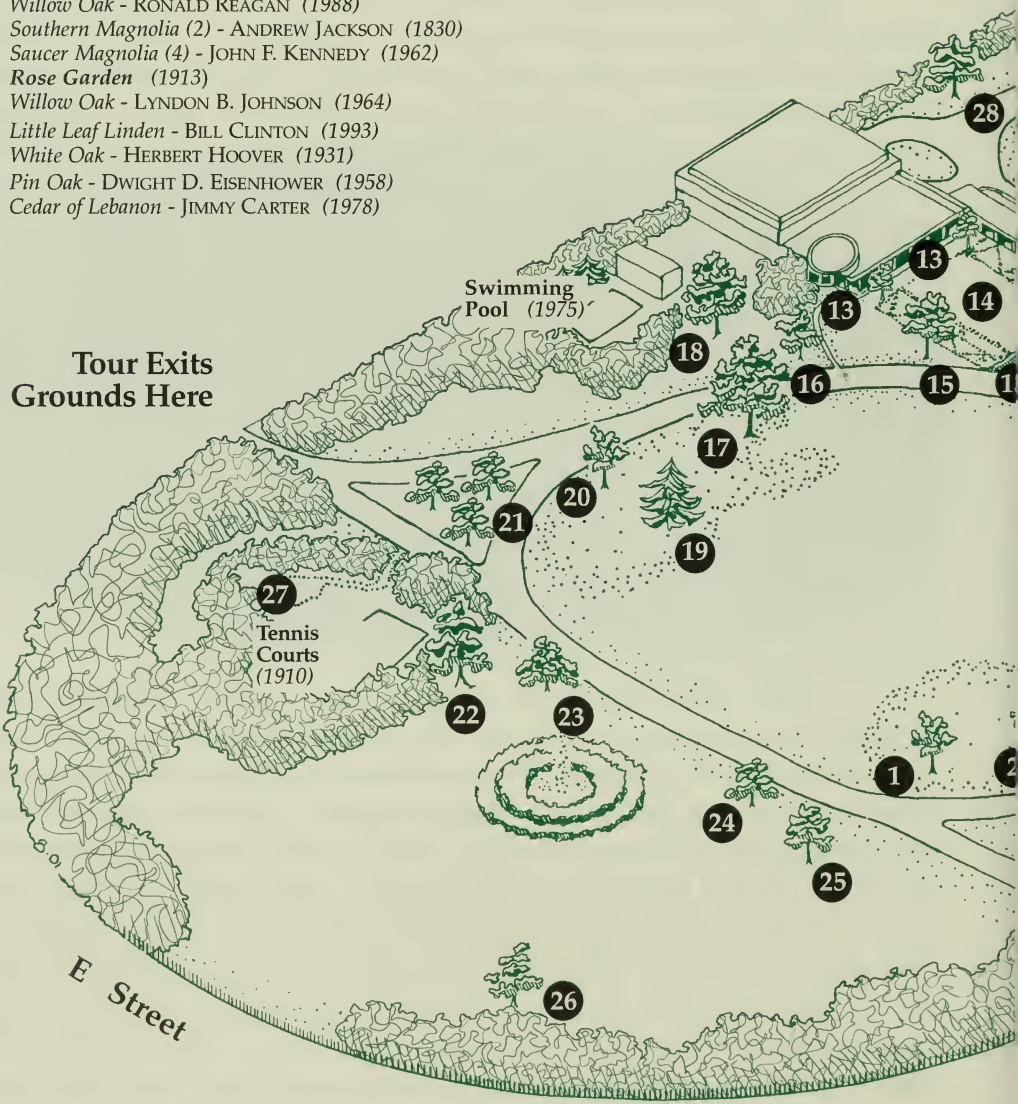
Andrew Jackson, Adams's successor, continued and expanded the gardening program, completing gardens for kitchen and pleasure, as well as an orangery, where healthful fruits matured in the cold months. Every June the Jackson Magnolia *grandiflora*, planted by him beside the South Portico, bursts into perfumed bloom, commemorating the man history remembers as Old Hickory.

In the 19th century the White House garden provided only limited family privacy. The grounds on the north were open every day. Tourists and business callers walked up a fenced driveway and entered as they might in any friend's house. Lincoln delivered several memorable speeches from the window over the front door, with several thousand listeners crowded below. The south grounds were more private; yet for many years the public went there weekly to hear the Marine Band play. F.B. Carpenter, visiting the White House during the Civil War to paint President Lincoln's portrait, remembered that during these concerts, Lincoln liked to stretch out on the Blue Room sofa and listen to the music through the closed shutters.

More typically the south grounds have been exclusively for the president, his family, and his guests. Here at springtime garden parties long ago, white parasols and straw hats bobbed among the

COMMEMORATIVE PLANTINGS

1. *American Elm* - JOHN Q. ADAMS *(original 1826,* BARBARA BUSH *1991)*
2. *Purple Beech* - GEORGE BUSH *(1991)*
3. *Patmore Ash* - GEORGE BUSH *(1989)*
4. *White Dogwood* - BILL & HILLARY CLINTON *(1996)*
5. *White Dogwood* - BILL & HILLARY CLINTON *(1995)*
6. *Northern Red Oak* - DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER *(1959)*
7. *Eastern Redbud* - GEORGE BUSH *(1990)*
8. *Little Leaf Linden* - GEORGE BUSH & QUEEN ELIZABETH II *(1991)*
9. *White Pine* - GERALD R. FORD *(1977)*
10. ***Jacqueline Kennedy Garden*** *(1965)*
11. *Willow Oak* - RONALD REAGAN *(1988)*
12. *Southern Magnolia (2)* - ANDREW JACKSON *(1830)*
13. *Saucer Magnolia (4)* - JOHN F. KENNEDY *(1962)*
14. ***Rose Garden*** *(1913)*
15. *Willow Oak* - LYNDON B. JOHNSON *(1964)*
16. *Little Leaf Linden* - BILL CLINTON *(1993)*
17. *White Oak* - HERBERT HOOVER *(1931)*
18. *Pin Oak* - DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER *(1958)*
19. *Cedar of Lebanon* - JIMMY CARTER *(1978)*



20. *Cutleaf Silver Maple* - George W. & Laura Bush *(2001)*
21. *White Dogwood (3)* - Hillary Rodham Clinton *(1994)*
22. *American Elm* - Bill & Hillary Clinton *(1993)*
23. *Japanese Maple* - Frances Folsom Cleveland *(1893)*
24. *Japanese Maple* - Rosalynn Carter *(1978)*
25. *Willow Oak* - Bill & Hillary Clinton *(1993)*
26. *White Oak* - Herbert Hoover *(1935)*
27. ***Children's Garden*** - Lyndon B. Johnson *(1969)*
28. *Sugar Maple* - Ronald Reagan *(1984)*
29. *Fern Leaf Beech* - Patricia Nixon *(1972)*
30. *Fern Leaf Beech* - Lady Bird Johnson *(1968)*
31. *American Elm* - Betty Ford *(1975)*
32. *English & American Boxwood* - Harry S. Truman *(1952)*
33. *White Saucer Magnolia (2)* - Nancy Reagan *(1982)*
34. *Red Maple* - Jimmy Carter *(1977)*
35. *White Oak* - Franklin D. Roosevelt *(1935)*
36. *Scarlet Oak* - Benjamin Harrison *(1889)*
37. *Southern Magnolia* - Warren G. Harding *(1922, replaced 1947)*
38. *Southern Magnolia* - Franklin D. Roosevelt *(1942)*

flowering dogwood. The president and first lady received on the South Portico, its iron railings abloom bright yellow with the Lady Banksia rose. In fall the glory of the maples, scarlet oaks, elms, and many other trees attracts a president from his labors for a break outdoors in crisp air and warm sun.

The White House landscape is enhanced by the gardener's art to seem natural, in an idealized sense. Experts groom the grand old trees to preserve their beauty and encourage the new ones in shapes and forms to suit the overall design concept. The earth itself has been shaped to give the impressions of both rolling and sprawling areas, increasing the sense of surprise as one goes from one part to the other. Spread over with a carpet of lush, green lawn, the man-made terrain has the effect of meadows, bordered by deep forests.

Only two formal gardens ornament the White House landscape, the Rose Garden to the west of the house proper, and the East Garden, also called the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden. They are the work of a succession of well-known gardening experts through the last century, notably Beatrix Farrand, who designed the original East Garden, and George Burnap, designer of the first Rose Garden, both in 1913 and 1914 for Ellen Axson Wilson (Mrs. Woodrow Wilson); and Perry Wheeler and Rachel Lambert Mellon, who restored and enhanced both gardens during the John F. Kennedy administration, bringing them to their present design. Protected in early bloom by the sun-warmed stones of the house, the east and west gardens abound in flowers spring, summer, and fall, and as for winter, Mrs. Mellon assured that "Even in snow the classical patterns of the hedges and upward thrust of the bare, silvery trees brings beauty here."

Among the great presidential gardeners who came after John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson was Millard Fillmore, who engaged the celebrated horticulturist and author Andrew Jackson Downing to redesign the grounds. President Ulysses S. Grant gave free rein to a major landscaping program, even as his wife, Julia Dent Grant, closed the south grounds entirely to the public, so her youngest boys Buck and Jesse could ride their velocipedes there undisturbed. The two round pools with their fountains in the north and south grounds were introduced by Grant in the mid-1870's. Today they are surrounded by colorful plantings seasonally, including tulips in the spring and memorable red salvia in the summer.

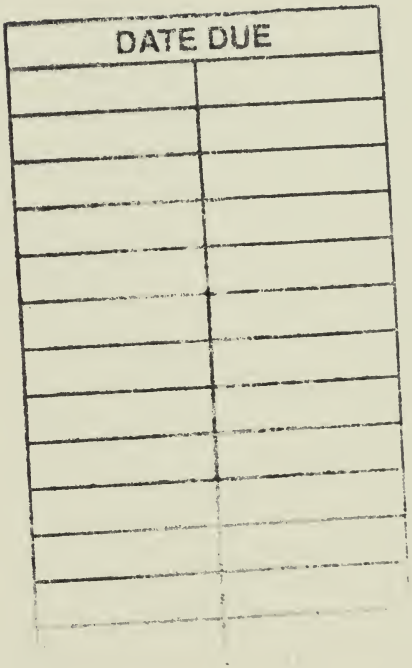
If President Grant's south grounds were off-limits, his succes-

sor Rutherford B. Hayes thought otherwise, and when the Congress in 1878 canceled the traditional Easter Monday custom of children rolling their Easter eggs down steep Capitol Hill, Hayes invited the banished young folk to bring their Easter baskets to his house. The slope was not as steep, but the day proved hilarious. Easter Egg rolling has been held in the White House grounds ever since, attracting today some twenty-five thousand youngsters.

Twentieth-century White House figures after Mrs. Wilson who took special interest in the garden included President Franklin D. Roosevelt. What you see today is the long shadow of Roosevelt's reconsideration of the grounds. Two issues faced him: first, accommodating heightened security surrounding the president; second, clearing a view to the south. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., of the well-known Massachusetts landscape firm, met the challenge. The concept he produced still guides the White House garden today. On the north Olmsted envisioned keeping the tree-shaded "front yard," as it had always been, while on the south he devised a long, elegant vista. Privacy and security were assured by grading along the sides to create berms and planting more trees, which resulted in the present flanking groves. The center was divested of many obscuring trees, and today's grand, open sweep of lawn resulted.

Tucked away in the White House garden are evidences everywhere of family use and enjoyment. Lady Bird Johnson (Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson) created the compelling Children's Garden, which you will see, a quiet, kid-scale retreat with fish pool and deep shade. Some of the paving stones are in fact bronze castings of hand and foot prints of grandchildren of presidents over the past thirty years. Nearby is the tennis court. Notice the ribbon of pavement around the south driveway: it is a cushioned running track! Not far from the southward bow of the Oval Office is the putting green.

An old custom at the White House is the planting of commemorative trees to represent each president while in office. The trees are labeled and keyed on your map. Their profusion of genus and species and their varying girths capture the rhythms of historical continuation here at the President's House. This garden is a living thing, no less than the restless grass in your yard or the placid cactus in your flowerpot. Like the White House itself, the garden and all the green evidences of its rich past remind us that our system of government prevails, yet is able to change as life and habitation may decree.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